VEGGIE HEAVY

Behold the Simple Comfort of a Butter-Baked Onion

Claire Lower
4/10/20 12:30PM • Filed to: ONIONS

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Photo: Claire Lower

Onions are an assertive ingredient, usually used to bring either aggressive astringency or deep, developed umami to a dish. A baked onion, however, does neither, and it still manages to be one of my favorite onions. Butter-baked onions are soft and sweet, with a brothy savoriness that reads almost like French onion soup. It's a homey, comforting side dish, and it only requires three ingredients.

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Traditionally Vidalia onions are favored for this preparation, but any mild or sweet onion will do. The peeled, slightly cored allium is stuffed with butter and your favorite bouillon, then baked until it is falling-apart soft. There's no charring, no caramelizing—just a humble, retrained allium, gently cooked in the laziest compound butter. To make it, you will need:

- 1 onion
- 1 tablespoon + 1 teaspoon butter
- 1 bouillon cube or 1 teaspoon of Better Than Bouillon (any flavor, but the roasted beef one will bring major French onion soup vibes)

Cut the root end off of the onion so it stands up on its own, peel the skin off, then core a substantial chunk out of the top of the onion with a paring knife; you just need enough space for about a tablespoon and a half of ingredients.

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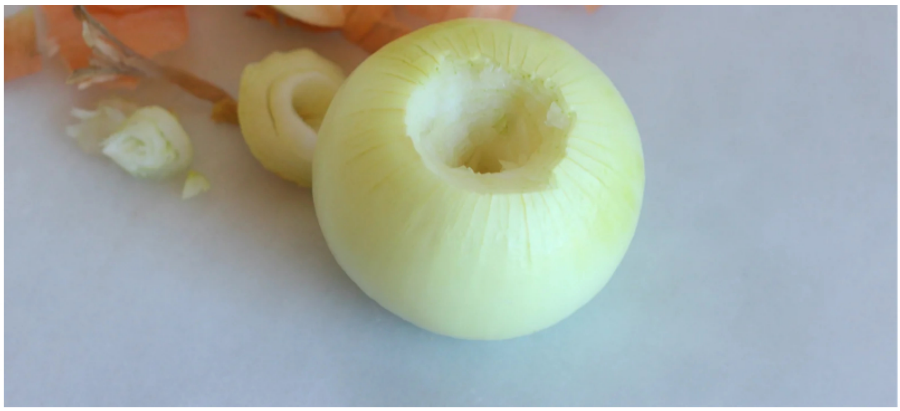

Photo: Claire Lower

Mash the butter and bouillon together, then stuff it inside its new home.

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Wrap the onion in foil, gathering it at the top so it looks a metal onion.

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Pop the little package in a 350-degree oven for 60-70 minutes, until it is soft and supple.

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Slice into it, and watch the tender slices melt into a pile.

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Baked onions can serve as a standalone side, but I've recently taken to throwing them into whatever pan sauce I happen to be making with dinner. Last night, after deglazing a pork chop pan with a little almost-oxidized vermouth, I added the onion (and its bouillon-y juices) to the pan—and folks, it's a move I will definitely be repeating.

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Claire is the Senior Food Editor for Lifehacker and a noted duck fat enthusiast. She lives in Portland, Oregon with a slightly hostile cat.

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